

PATENT

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

[0001] DEVICE AND METHOD OF DISPLAYING PHOTOGRAPHS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0002] This application claims benefit of provisional patent application number 60/407,548 filed on August 29, 2002.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH

[0003] Not Applicable

REFERENCE TO MICROFICHE APPENDIX

[0004] Not Applicable

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The present invention generally relates to devices for displaying pictures such as photographs or the like.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0006] Pictures such as photographs or the like are typically displayed in picture frames and the like. There are many different types of picture frames and holders including some devices which hang the pictures using chains or ribbons to permit movement of the picture. These devices, however, do not permit free movement of the pictures and can be relatively expensive to produce.

[0007] While the prior devices may suitably display the pictures, there is an on going need and/or desire for display devices which are aesthetically pleasing, novel, and/or are relatively inexpensive to produce. Accordingly, there is a need for an improved device and method for displaying pictures such as photographs or the like.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] The present invention provides a device for displaying a picture which overcomes at least some of the above-noted problems of the related art. According to the present invention, a device for displaying a picture includes, in combination, a support member and a plaque. The plaque includes a plate member and an adhesive layer on a side of the plate member for adhering the picture to the plate member. A swivel hangs the plaque from the support member.

[0009] According to another aspect of the present invention, a device for displaying at least one picture comprises, in combination a plaque including a plate member and an adhesive layer on a side of the plate member for adhering the picture to the plate member. A swivel is secured to the plaque for hanging the plaque.

[0010] According to yet another aspect of the present invention, a method for displaying at least one picture comprises the steps of, in combination, providing a support member, providing a plaque including a plate member and an adhesive layer on a side of the plate member for adhering the picture to the plate member, and providing a swivel for hanging the plaque from the support member.

[0011] From the foregoing disclosure and the following more detailed description of various preferred embodiments it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that the present invention provides a significant advance in the technology and art of picture display devices. Particularly significant in this regard is the potential the invention affords for providing a high quality, reliable, easily maintainable, low cost assembly. Additional features and advantages of various preferred embodiments will be better understood in view of the detailed description provided below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] These and further features of the present invention will be apparent with reference to the following description and drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a device for displaying a picture according to the present invention;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged front elevation view of a plaque and connector of the display device of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a side elevation view of the plaque and the connector of FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is a side elevation view of a plaque similar to FIG. 3 but prior to installation of pictures;

FIGS. 5A to 5E are front elevation views similar to FIG. 2 but showing alternative shapes for the plaques;

FIG. 6 is a perspective view similar to FIG. 1 but showing an alternative support member;

FIG. 7 is a perspective view similar to FIGS. 1 and 6 but showing another alternative support member;

FIG. 8 is a perspective view similar to FIGS. 1, 6, and 7 but showing another alternative support member; and

FIG. 9 is a perspective view similar to FIGS. 1, 6, 7 and 8 but showing another alternative support member.

[0013] It should be understood that the appended drawings are not necessarily to scale, presenting a somewhat simplified representation of various preferred features illustrative of the basic principles of the invention. The specific design features of a display device as disclosed herein, including, for example, specific dimensions, orientations, locations, and shapes will be determined in part by the particular intended application and use environment. Certain features of the illustrated embodiments have been enlarged or distorted relative to others to facilitate visualization and clear understanding. In particular, thin features may be thickened, for

example, for clarity or illustration. All references to direction and position, unless otherwise indicated, refer to the orientation of the display device illustrated in the drawings. In general, up or upward refers to an upward direction within the plane of the paper in the figures and down or downward refers to a downward direction within the plane of the paper in the figures.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF CERTAIN PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0014] It will be apparent to those skilled in the art, that is, to those who have knowledge or experience in this area of technology, that many uses and design variations are possible for the improved display device disclosed herein. The following detailed discussion of various alternative and preferred embodiments will illustrate the general principles of the invention with reference to a photograph holder. Other embodiments suitable for other applications will be apparent to those skilled in the art given the benefit of this disclosure.

[0015] Referring now to the drawings, FIG. 1 illustrates a device 10 for displaying pictures such as photographs or the like according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. The display device 10 includes at least one plaque 12 for holding at least one picture, a swivel connector 14 for pivotably hanging the plaque 12, and a support or stand 16 for supporting the hanging plaque 12.

[0016] FIGS. 2 and 3 illustrate a preferred plaque 12 wherein a pair of pictures 18 have been installed. The illustrated plaque 12 includes a generally rigid plate member 20, a pair adhesive layers 22, and the pair of pictures 18 such as photographs. The plate member 20 has opposed substantially planar and parallel side surfaces and is relatively thin forming a thin edge about the perimeter of the side surfaces. The edge of the plate member 20 can be of any desired shape. The plate member 20 is preferably die cut from suitable sheet stock. Dies for producing custom shapes are available from Ellison Educational Equipment Corporation which can be utilized with an Ellison Letter Machine to die cut sheet stock. The illustrated plate member 20 is provided with an opening 24 near its top which is sized and shaped for cooperating with the swivel connector 14 as described in more detail hereinafter. The illustrated plaque 12 is sized

for displaying six inch by four inch photographs but the plaque 12 can be sized for displaying larger or smaller pictures.

[0017] The plate member 20 is preferably comprised of paper board such as, for example, fourteen ply poster board which is approximately one-eighth inch thick. The plate member 20 can comprise other suitable materials such as, for example, metal sheets, plastic sheets, or magnetic sheets. The plate member can also comprise luminescent materials, photographic materials, heat sensitive materials, or chemical sensitive materials either as part the sheet material or coatings on the sheet material. Luminescent materials are particularly desirable because they back-light or otherwise illuminate the picture 18. Luminescent materials can be, for example, photo-luminescent (glow-in-the-dark), thermo-luminescent, or electroluminescent. For electroluminescent materials, electrical current may be provided from an appropriate source having electrical characteristics sufficient to and appropriate for the desired device make-up and application. For example, a battery can be carried by the plate member 20 and operably connected to the electroluminescent material.

[0018] Each side surface of the plate member 20 is provided with the layer of adhesive 22. The adhesive layer 22 is preferably a pressure-sensitive adhesive but other suitable adhesives can be utilized. The adhesive layers 22 are of a suitable thickness and are sized and shaped to cover all or substantially all of the side surfaces of the plate member 20. While the illustrated plaque 12 includes an adhesive layer 22 that covers all of the side surfaces, it is noted that the adhesive layer can alternatively cover only a portion of the side surfaces when it is desired to leave a portion of the plate member 20 exposed. While the illustrated plaque 12 includes an adhesive layer 22 on each side of the plate member 20, it is noted that alternatively only one of the two sides can be provided with an adhesive layer 22 if it is desired to display a picture on only one side of the plate member 20. The adhesive layers 22 can be applied to the plate member 20 such as by a Xyron machine or sheet stock of the plate member material can be purchased with the adhesive layers 22 already applied from which the plate member 20 and adhesive layers 22 can be die cut.

[0019] A pair of pictures 18 such as photographs are adhered to opposite sides of the plate member 20 on the adhesive layers 22. The pictures 18 have the same or substantially the same shape as the plate members 20. The pictures 18 preferably are planar sheets of paper, photographic paper, or other suitable material that is easily cut by a knife or scissors.

[0020] As best shown in FIG. 4, the plaque 12 is preferably sold without the pictures 18 attached and with the adhesive layers 22 covered by release layers 26. A suitable release layer 26 comprises a sheet of paper with a waxy, non stick film thereon to releasably engage the adhesive layer 22. The release layers 26 are sized and shaped to cover the entire adhesive layer 22 and preferably are sized and shaped to match the plate member 20. Once a plaque 12 is purchased, the user peels away the release layer 26, adheres a picture 18 to the exposed adhesive, and trims the picture 18 with scissors or a knife so that the shape of the picture 18 substantially conforms to the shape of the plate member 20. The process is then repeated on the other side of the plaque 12 so that there is a picture 18 adhered to each side of the plate member 20.

[0021] There are at least three methods for changing the pictures 18 once they are adhered to the plate member 20. One method is to simply obtain a new plaque 12 and adhere the new picture 18. A second method is to cover the existing picture 18 with a thin sheet of paper with adhesive layers on each side. One side is adhered to the existing picture 18 on the plaque 12 and the new picture is applied to the other side. A third method is to cover the existing picture 18 on the plaque with an additional layer of adhesive to which the new picture is adhered.

[0022] The edge of the illustrated plaque 12 is in the shape of a fanciful triangle. FIGS. 5A to 5E illustrate that the plate member 20 can have other suitable shapes such as, for example, a star, a flower, a diamond, an oval, or a heart. The plaques 12 can be formed in a variety of other shapes which come from a variety of sources including seasonal, floral, celestial, musical, structural, lettering, religious, animal, geometric, numerical, sports, human, and whimsical.

[0023] As best shown in FIGS. 2 and 3, the illustrated swivel connector 14 includes a swivel 28 such as the illustrated barrel type swivel and a pair of rings 30 which permit the suspended plaque 12 to freely move by both swinging and rotating upon external forces being applied. The swivel 28 permits free rotation of the plaque, that is, the plaque may continuously rotate in either direction without binding or winding even when multiple rotations are made in a single direction. The swivel 28 has opposed ends which freely pivot or rotate relative to each other about a central longitudinal axis 32. Suitable swivels 28 are item numbers JC8440-01 and JC8440-02, ½ inch, silver and gold respectively, which are commercially available from the Horizon Group under the mark Jewelry and Craft Essentials. Each end of the illustrated swivel 28 is provided with one of the rings 30, one for extending through the opening 24 in the plaque 12 and the other for cooperating with the support member 16. Suitable rings 30 are item numbers JC8465-01 and JC8465-02, 9 mm, silver and gold respectively which are commercially available from the Horizon Group under the mark Jewelry and Craft Essentials. It is noted that larger or smaller sizes of swivels 28 and/or rings 30 may be needed for different applications. Other suitable types of swivel connectors 14 can be utilized for pivotably hanging the plaque 12 from the support member 16 such as, for example, the swivel connector 14 can be an ornate spinning clasp and ring so that the plaque 12 becomes a charm when connected to a support member 16 in the form of a necklace, bracelet, or the like.

[0024] In some cases it may be desired to obtain additional hanging length. This can be accomplished by stringing ornamental beads through a metal pin. Various beads and trinket can be utilized as spacers. Additionally, the barrel of the swivel connector 14 can be covered with a single large bead or other ornamental members.

[0025] The support member 16 is sized and shaped to support at least one of the plaques 12 in a suspended or hanging manner wherein the plaque 12 can freely pivot or rotate about the central longitudinal axis 32 of the swivel connector 14. The illustrated support member 16 is a single-plaque stand 33 formed of a metal wire having a base 34 for resting on a horizontal

support surface an a hook 36 spaced above the base 34. The hook 36 extends through one of the rings 30 of the swivel connector 14 to support the plaque 12 in a hanging manner above the base 34. Freely hanging in this manner the plaque 12 spins or rotates about the central longitudinal axis 32 of the swivel connector 14 upon forces being applied thereto. A suitable single-plaque stand 33 is item number 35380 and 35385, ten inch tall, spiral base, silver and brass respectively, wire ornamental stand having a seven and one-half inch hanging height which is commercially available from Tripar International.

[0026] As best shown in FIG. 6, the support member 16 can hold more than one hanging plaque 12 such as, for example, the illustrated three plaques 12 held by a multiple plaque stand 37. A suitable multiple-plaque stand 37 is item number 34122, ten and one-half inch tall, spiral base, three-arm brass ornamental stand having hanging heights of five and three-fourth inches, seven and one-half inches, and eight and three-fourth inches, which is commercially available from Tripar International.

[0027] As best shown in FIGS. 7 to 9, the support member 16 can take many other forms. FIG. 7 illustrates a support member 16 in the form of ornamental hook 38 which can be hooked, for example, to a review mirror 40 of an automobile. A suitable ornamental hook 38 is item number 35701, three inch pearl ornamental extender, commercially available from Tripar International. FIG. 8 illustrates a support member 16 in the form of a wire member 42 having a base with a suction cup 44 to permit the wire member 42 to be releasably secured to desired surfaces such as windows or locker doors with the suction cup 44. FIG. 9 illustrates a support member 16 in the form of a wire member 42 having base with a magnet 46 to permit the wire member 42 to be releasably secured to desired surfaces such as refrigerator or locker doors with the magnet 46.

[0028] In another variation, a support member in the form of a smaller stand such as, for example, about five inches tall is utilized with smaller plaques and double sided tape, a magnet,

or a suction cup is provided on the base of the stand so that the stand can be adhered to any surface.

[0029] It is apparent from the above disclosure that the device 10 of the present invention provides a relatively inexpensive and aesthetically pleasing means for hanging pictures. With the device described above, the suspended pictures have free motion like mobiles by rotating and swaying depending on the external forces applied thereto.

[0030] From the foregoing disclosure and detailed description of certain preferred embodiments, it is also apparent that various modifications, additions and other alternative embodiments are possible without departing from the true scope and spirit of the present invention. The embodiments discussed were chosen and described to provide the best illustration of the principles of the present invention and its practical application to thereby enable one of ordinary skill in the art to utilize the invention in various embodiments and with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated. All such modifications and variations are within the scope of the present invention as determined by the appended claims when interpreted in accordance with the benefit to which they are fairly, legally, and equitably entitled.